

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 25, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House- West Wing
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20502

Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

President Biden and Secretary Austin:

As you are aware, establishing secure and resilient critical mineral supply chains is in the United States' national security interest and of utmost importance to this Congress. Currently, the United States relies significantly on foreign nations, many of them unfriendly and with nonexistent labor and environmental standards, to meet the United States' present critical mineral demands. Additionally, China dominates much of the international critical mineral supply chain on land and is now ramping up focus on seafloor resources known to be the largest estimated source of metals like cobalt, nickel, and manganese, presenting a national security vulnerability for the United States. As the Administration looks at mineral mining and processing opportunities to counter China's influence and secure mineral supplies for key technologies, it is crucial that opportunities beyond land, including deep-sea, are seriously considered in the interest of national security.

China has long antagonized the U.S. with their use of forced labor, pollutive practices, and unfair subsidies in key industries. Recently, China has taken aggressive and brazen steps to secure and process seabed resources of polymetallic nodules into strategic planning for national security. Currently, Chinese companies hold 5 out of 31 International Seabed Authority (ISA) contracts for exploration and development- more than any other country. The United States has none, though there remains an opportunity to evaluate domestic processing and refining of seafloor resources from the contracts held by allied parties and domestic partners in international waters.

In addition, China is investing heavily in deep-sea mining technology including remotely operated vehicles, vessels, and sonar scanning systems. To counter China's growing hold on the global supply chain, it is essential that the United States secures its own innovative supply of critical and strategic minerals and materials, including polymetallic nodules, to decrease reliance on sources from foreign adversaries.

Considering today's threat landscape, we urge the Department to keep all options, including deep-sea opportunities, on the table in assessing polymetallic nodules as a viable resource to secure critical minerals and close national security vulnerabilities. Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to working with you and the rest of the Administration on our

shared goal of enhancing the mineral security and supply of the United States and countering China's rising influence in the sphere.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress



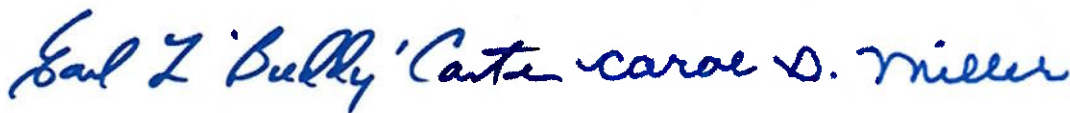
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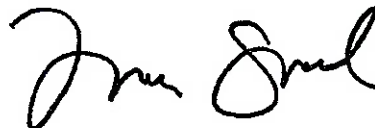


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